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LESTER B. PEARSON PARK
BEASLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD, HAMILTON, ONTARIO

CITY OF HAMILTON
February, 1973



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BEASLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD - LESTER B. PEARSON PARK

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INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

- . Lester B. Pearson's past life in Hamilton
- . Request for funds

Lester B. Pearson lived in Hamilton from 1910 - 1914. Quotations regarding Hamilton and his residence here, taken from his Preface to the book "A Mountain And A City", follow.

"My first reaction to arrival in Hamilton was annoyance at having to leave Peterborough where my father had spent three years as Minister of George Street Methodist Church and where we had had a very happy time.

But we soon were equally happy in Hamilton, at the Wesley Church Parsonage, a big red brick building on Catharine Street North - Number 137, I think - much too large to be looked after alone by an overworked Minister's wife with three active boys.

The district wasn't exactly "a desirable residential suburb," but it was pleasant, the neighbours friendly and there was room to play without worrying about traffic.

But the country was very close to the city, and a picnic up the mountain and beyond was an adventure into the wilds. To get to Burlington Beach for a swim was an exploit, and to get to Grimsby to pick fruit was a trek.


It was becoming a big city - as we thought. I remember that in Centennial Year, the boast was that the population had reached almost one hundred thousand.

Those were wonderful days and Hamilton was a good place in which to live.

When we left in June 1914 for Chatham, Ontario, I felt just like I did on leaving Peterborough. On that earlier occasion, I took my Entrance examination certificate with me. On this occasion, I took my Senior Matriculation. For that I owe much to the teachers of old Hamilton Collegiate Institute, as I do for the lasting friendships I made there.

I gather there have been many changes since then in that part of Hamilton.

May Hamilton continue to flourish!"



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The house that Mr. Pearson lived in is situated in an area adjacent to "Downtown" Hamilton; a portion of this area has been designated as the site of an urban core park.

The City of Hamilton is unable to meet the total cost requirements of providing this joint National Historic Site - urban park - open space and is at this time appealing to both the Federal and Provincial Governments for financial assistance. We feel strongly that this valuable urban and national resource should not be lost because of existing funding problems.

BACKGROUND

- . *Outline for Neighbourhood Study Programme*
- . *How it works*
- . *What we hope to accomplish*

The initial approach to urban redevelopment taken by the Federal and Provincial Governments, in partnership with many municipalities, was the Urban Renewal Programme. This programme, successful as far as physical redevelopment was concerned, also managed to irritate and alienate the people affected, as well as create social havoc in many tightly knit neighbourhoods.

In Hamilton as well as other urban centres, the funds for Urban Renewal Programmes were withdrawn. In the void created, Hamilton City Council and Planning Board initiated a new approach to renewal which stresses community involvement.

Though the City's Planning Department has been drafting Neighbourhood Plans for undeveloped areas of the City for many years, it is now also using this approach on existing neighbourhoods. Plans to guide the future redevelopment and use of land in existing neighbourhoods within the older built up sections of the City are being prepared. The neighbourhoods to which we affix the highest priority in terms of immediate need for study are most often within or adjacent to the central business district and are experiencing either rapid change or great pressure to do so.

There are similarities in the purpose of neighbourhood plans for undeveloped and developed neighbourhoods -- that is, both guide development and outline land use. However, a modified approach is required when dealing with previously developed areas of the City. We are concerned with identifying the needs and problems of residents and are formulating both short term and long term approaches.

A Citizens' Committee for each neighbourhood meets regularly with two or three of the Planning Department staff, six to ten times depending on the committee's wishes. At the Committee's request, representatives from other city departments are often called into these meetings to give expert opinion to the committee. The City's Departments of Engineering,

Traffic, Recreation, Parks Board, the School Boards, both Public and Separate and the Community Development Committee are some of the major contributors of advice to the Committee. At the termination of these meetings, through debate, a consensus is reached and a Guide Plan for future land use as well as a Programme of desirable short range improvements are approved by the Citizens Committee.

The Planning Board authorizes circularizing of Proposed Plan, along with notice of a public meeting, to all land owners in the neighbourhood, for the purpose of exposing the programme to all residents. After the public meeting, written submissions are accepted by the Planning Board for consideration. When the final draft of the Plan and Programme have been approved by Planning Board, they proceed through the normal process to City Council.

In an area of complex existing development, it is virtually impossible to establish a totally acceptable Neighbourhood Plan which meets everyone's desires. However, an orderly basis for change -- or preservation is essential; a basis more comprehensive than piece-meal zoning applications, yet more intricate and locally sensitive than the broad provision of an Official Plan is required. The Neighbourhood Plan gives us a place to start. We develop some instinct for the desires of residents, making both short and long range Plans, in an attempt to attain these goals and objectives.

Budget restrictions and limited funds will invariably effect, often detrimentally, the timing of needed capital improvements. Funding such as that outlined in the Federal Government Neighbourhood Improvement Programme, would add credence and reality to much of the neighbourhood improvement outlined in our current Neighbourhood Study Programme.

FEDERAL PROGRAMME

. How this park and our approach fit into the programme

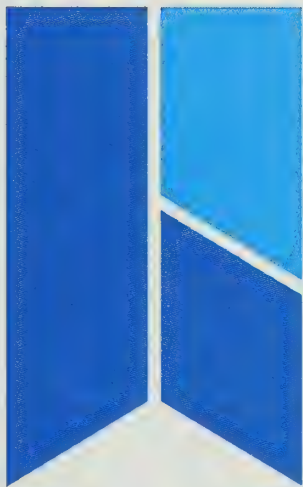
The Federal government has just recently outlined its plans for introducing legislation to provide financial assistance to municipalities for Neighbourhood Improvement Programmes. This programme is extremely similar to the Neighbourhood Study Programmes that the City of Hamilton is presently carrying out.

Bill C-133, "the 1973 National Housing Act Amendments", was introduced in the House of Commons by the Hon. Mr. Basford. In this new programme the Federal-Provincial partnership would assist in aiding municipalities to improve living conditions within neighbourhoods. This would be achieved in the existing community by the subsidy of neighbourhood improvement projects and programmes.

Under the proposed legislation, the Federal Government has outlined its role of assuming up to half the cost of neighbourhood improvement studies and planning; the acquisition or clearing of land for open space or for

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community facilities; the cost of low income housing and the provision of neighbourhood recreational or social facilities would be similarly subsidized.

There are two sections with the 1973 Amendments which relate specifically to Hamilton's Neighbourhood Programme and Lester B. Pearson Park. The sections relate to: acquiring or clearing land for open space and improving neighbourhood recreational or social facilities. Alternately, should Bill C-133 not be approved, an application would be made under another section of the National Housing Act.

BEASLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD DETAILS

General . *Park location theory*

. *Park standards and open space as an urban resource*

The proposed Lester B. Pearson Park is located within Beasley Neighbourhood. That neighbourhood is just one of six major downtown neighbourhoods that the City Planning Department dealt with in 1972 on a neighbourhood by neighbourhood basis.

In theory the park should be adjacent to the neighbourhood school - providing a safe, accessible, central location. Park and playground - recreation facilities would both be provided for neighbourhood residents of all ages under this proposal.

Where possible, park-open space is located in such a way as to eliminate incompatible existing uses. Uses that are non-conforming, undesirable, or deemed obnoxious are often sought out to be replaced by park open space wherever this is economically and physically possible.

The amount of park area in any given neighbourhood must also be proportional to the proposed population, assuming redevelopment in these central and dynamic neighbourhoods. Much of the redevelopment is often to a higher residential density which poses the problem of planning a park not for today, but rather for some undetermined date, say five to ten years in the future - at which time completion of redevelopment can be anticipated.

The widely accepted National, Provincial and Municipal minimum standard for local park open space on a neighbourhood scale, is 1 acre per 1,000 people. This leads us to calculations of park-open space in relation to existing and proposed populations, in order to determine deficiencies in this valuable neighbourhood and municipal resource.

Existing . *Parks in Beasley Neighbourhood*

. *Need for open space*



LESTER B. PEARSON'S FORMER HOME
137 Catharine Street North

The Beasley Neighbourhood presently has a population of 5,167, which is serviced to two extremely small open space areas. Neither of these is close to the neighbourhood school, one being 1/3 of an acre, the other 2/3 of an acre. Both of these parkettes are predominantly paved over and are used primarily for extremely restricted local recreational uses rather than as neighbourhood open space.

Proposal . *Why Lester B. Pearson Park*

- . *Neighbourhood Park*
- . *Park Plan*
- . *Lester B. Pearson Proposed Park Facilities*

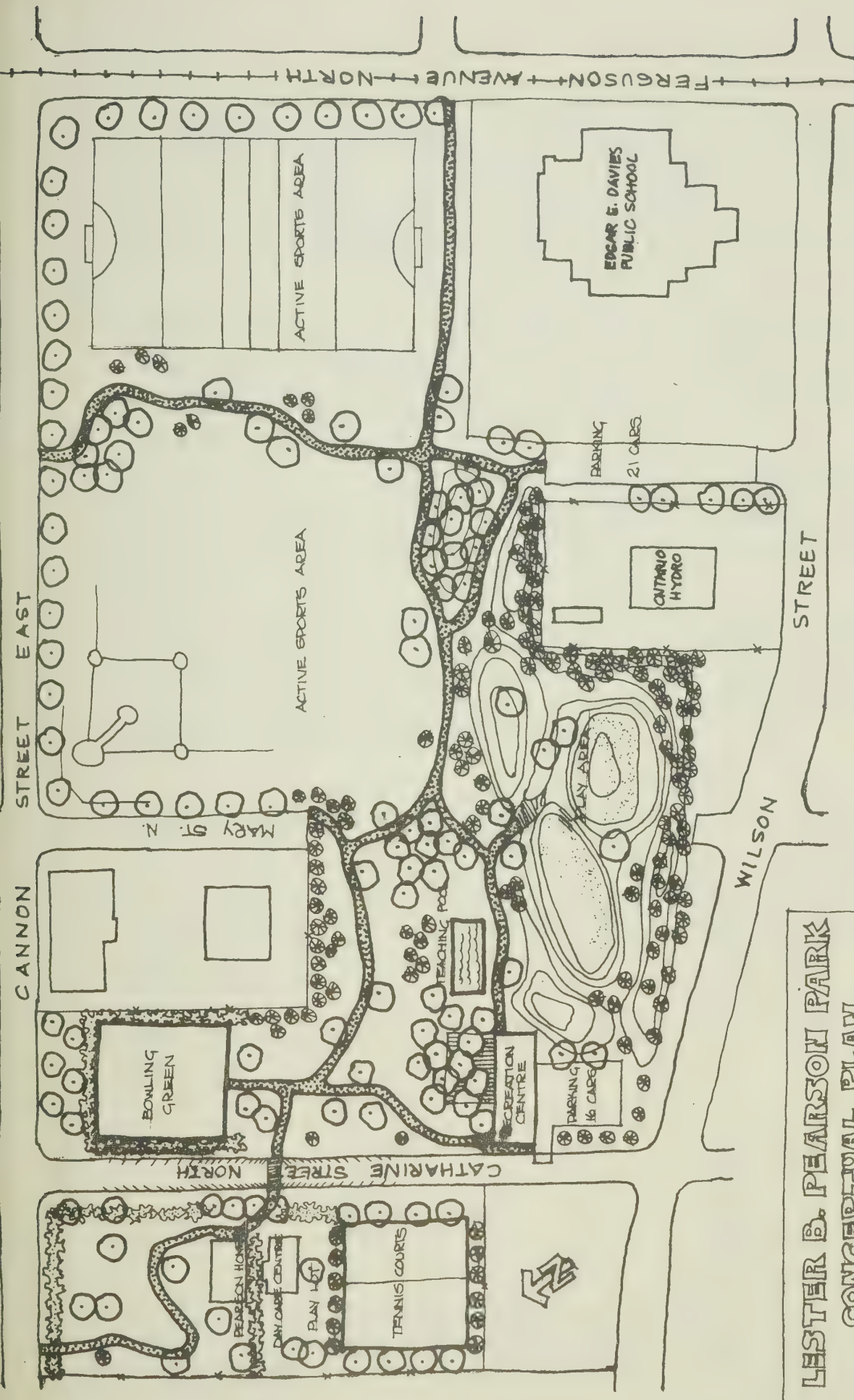
A Citizens' Committee for Beasley Neighbourhood was formed in February of 1972 and one of their initial concerns was the desperate lack of park open space in their neighbourhood.

With the passing of the late Hon. Lester B. Pearson, the City became conscious of the fact that Mr. Pearson once lived in the Beasley Neighbourhood in Hamilton. Further investigation revealed that he lived at 137 Catharine Street during his adolescent years. When City Council became aware of this information it did not hesitate to strongly recommend that a park be established in the honour of Lester B. Pearson. It also requested that an exploration be made into the costs and feasibility of retaining and preserving the Pearson Home and that the possibility of associating it with the proposed park as an historic structure of national interest, be investigated.

When it was realized that with the redevelopment of the neighbourhood, in conformity with the Proposed Plan, the population of Beasley Neighbourhood would reach 10,000, a suitable neighbourhood park became top priority. With the population nearly doubling, a policy was set by the Committee to work towards attaining 1 acre of usable park open space per 1,000 persons for the future population of Beasley Neighbourhood.

Redevelopment has already been started and to some degree was sparked by the Federal-Provincial partnership establishing a senior citizens residence in this neighbourhood. Establishing the park at the site proposed, would put this valuable resource within two blocks walking distance of the senior citizens residence.

The Committee strongly recommended that a 9 - 10 acre park be located adjacent to or within the close proximity of the Dr. J. Edgar Davies Public School. Its recommendations, in concurrence with the Parks Board staff recommendation, were taken into consideration. The Proposed Plan which the Planning Department forwarded to the Planning Board and the City Council shows a park adjacent to the school. Both Planning Board and City Council have approved this Plan.



LESTER B. PEARSON PARK CONCEPTUAL PLAN



SCALE in FEET
FEBRUARY, 1973

CITY OF HAMILTON

Four buildings, the existing Dr. J. Edgar Davies Public School, the Labour Union Building at 110 Catharine Street North, and numbers 131 and 137 Catharine Street North are incorporated into the park structure. The school has a combination auditorium-gymnasium, and a paved surface which is considered to be a playground. It is recommended that sports fields (not necessarily standard size), small scale track and field facilities and a more stimulating play area be provided near the school.

The Labour Union Building would be the neighbourhood centre for recreational purposes. An auditorium already exists, and could be modified to provide a gymnasium for such activities as basketball or gymnastics. In connection with this, change rooms and showers are needed. The rest of the space in the building can be used for meeting rooms, crafts rooms, etc. Squash courts are another possibility.

The Hamilton Recreation Department suggests a teaching pool in the neighbourhood. A wading pool is presently located on Wellington, north of Cannon. Since change and shower facilities are to be located in the recreation building rather than the school, the site shown within the park in Fig. 1 is the better location for the pool.

An area for flooding in winter to provide skating can be situated either near the school or the recreation building. A depression can be designed specifically for this purpose, or else part of the sports field can serve as a rink. Outdoor activities like tennis and lawn bowling should also be set up reasonably close to the recreation centre, so that its facilities are easily available to all the park users.

The house at 131 Catharine Street North can be utilized as a day care centre or nursery school; a play lot should be provided adjacent to the house. Although there is presently a play lot on John Street North, south of Cannon, it is of questionable quality and should be replaced by the play lot proposed in the park. The adjoining Lester B. Pearson Home, maintained for its historic significance, should be provided with sufficient grounds and open space to be displayed effectively. A landscaped buffer should also be left along major perimeter routes, particularly Cannon Street and Wilson Street.

The present population of Beasley Neighbourhood is 5,167, the age break down is as follows:

| <u>AGE (Yrs.)</u> | <u>%</u> |
|-------------------|----------|
| 0 - 5 | 9.56 |
| 6 - 12 | 12.63 |
| 13 - 20 | 11.97 |
| 21 - 50 | 41.26 |
| 51 - 65 | 14.00 |
| 66+ | 10.56 |

The proposed neighbourhood population will be approximately 10,000. Allowing 1 ac./1,000 persons, the parks should be approximately 11 acres. In designing facilities for the proposed park, the age and characteristics of the residents were considered.

- Cost
- . *Chart of land acquisition, clearing, landscaping*
 - . *Staging*
 - . *Financing*

A breakdown of land uses, residents, owners and costs of acquisition on the park site is shown in the following Table. It is hoped that this expenditure will qualify under the Federal Governments Neighbourhood Improvement Programme, or under another section of the National Housing Act.

The City of Hamilton would like to finance the proposed Lester B. Pearson Park over a six year period. This would permit immediate acquisition of 137 Catharine Street and would provide convenience in funding and allowing for staging of property acquisition. An absolute minimum of expropriation will be needed if owners and tenants in the area were informed of the cities intentions. It is anticipated that the majority of properties could be acquired within six years and any residual properties within eight to ten years after the project is initiated.

It is the hope of the City of Hamilton that both the Federal and Provincial Governments will support this project. It is an opportunity for all levels of government to simultaneously, and in unison, embark on a progressive programme of neighbourhood conservation, rehabilitation and controlled redevelopment within Hamilton's urban core.

TABLE 1

COST CHART OF: LAND ACQUISITION
CLEARING
LANDSCAPING

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|--|--------------|----------|------------|------|------|------------|------|------|-------------|------|------|--------|------|------|--------|------|-----|--|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. | Area of Private Lands to be acquired | 401,675 sq. ft. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | " " Public " " " " | 89,820 sq. ft. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | " " Total " " " " | <u>491,495 sq. ft.</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. | Number of Resident Owners | 47 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | " " Non-resident Owners | 44 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | " " Owners/Properties | <u>91</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. | Number of Residential Units | 117 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | " " Commercial " | 34 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | " " Vacant Lots | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Total Number of Units, including vacant lots | <u>158</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. | Percent of Total Land Use in designated park Area | <table><tr><td></td><td><u>Acres</u></td><td><u>%</u></td></tr><tr><td>Industrial</td><td>2.82</td><td>24.7</td></tr><tr><td>Commercial</td><td>1.75</td><td>15.3</td></tr><tr><td>Residential</td><td>4.47</td><td>39.6</td></tr><tr><td>Public</td><td>2.25</td><td>19.6</td></tr><tr><td>Vacant</td><td>.15-</td><td>1.3</td></tr><tr><td></td><td><u>11.44 A±</u></td><td><u>100.0%</u></td></tr></table> | | <u>Acres</u> | <u>%</u> | Industrial | 2.82 | 24.7 | Commercial | 1.75 | 15.3 | Residential | 4.47 | 39.6 | Public | 2.25 | 19.6 | Vacant | .15- | 1.3 | | <u>11.44 A±</u> | <u>100.0%</u> |
| | <u>Acres</u> | <u>%</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Industrial | 2.82 | 24.7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Commercial | 1.75 | 15.3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Residential | 4.47 | 39.6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Public | 2.25 | 19.6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vacant | .15- | 1.3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <u>11.44 A±</u> | <u>100.0%</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. | All properties are zoned J - Light and Limited Heavy Industry. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. | Estimated Cost by Purchase | 3,200,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Estimated Cost by Expropriation | 3,700,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Estimated Cost of Demolition & Clearance | 200,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Basic Improvements (including landscaping) | 400,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Acquisition of Pearson Home | 105,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | TOTAL ESTIMATE COST OF PROJECT (1973)* | <u>3,905,000 to 4,305,000</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. | Number of persons affected by acquisition of their homes (not including children) approx. | 130 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

The majority of the above information was collected by the City of Hamilton Real Estate Department, September, 1972.

* (This is the 1973 estimated cost and to attain a true figure of the 6 year project 6% should be added to the shown cost and compounded annually over the 6 year time period which would give a complete project cost of approx.\$6 million)

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